

4. DENDROCHELIDON CORONATA.

Hirundo coronata, Tickell.*Macropteryx longipennis*, Jerdon.*Dendrochelidon schisticolor*, Bp. Consp. p. 66.*D. coronata*, Gould, B. Asia, pt. xi. pl. 2.*Hab.* Continental India and Ceylon.

5. DENDROCHELIDON COMATA.

Cypselus comatus, Temm.*Dendrochelidon comata*, Gould, B. Asia, pt. xi. pl. 6.*Hab.* Borneo, Sumatra, and Philippines (*Mus. Lugd.*); Siam (*Finlayson*).

November 14, 1865.

John Gould, Esq., F.R.S., V.P., in the Chair.

Mr. S. Stevens exhibited a nearly perfect egg of a *Dinornis*, supposed to be that of *D. ingens*, Owen, which had been placed in his hands for sale, and read the following extract from a newspaper published at Wellington, New Zealand, on the subject:—

“There is at the present time being exhibited at Messrs. Bethune and Hunter’s stores, for the benefit of the curious, an object of no less interest than the egg of a Moa. It appears, from what we learn from Captain Davidson, of the schooner ‘Ruby,’ which trades between this port and the Kai Koras, that a man in Mr. Fyffe’s employment at the latter place was digging the foundation of a house, when on the side of a small mound he suddenly came upon the egg in question, and the skeleton of a man, supposed of course to be a Maori. The body had evidently been buried in a sitting posture, and the egg must have been placed in the hands, as when found the arms were extended in such a manner as to bring it immediately opposite the mouth of the deceased. This, it is assumed, was in accordance with the Maori custom, and was done for the purpose of giving the individual who was buried an opportunity of sustaining himself if he thought proper, or if, in the course of things, he required sustenance. Between the legs of the skeleton were found numerous tools, cut from greenstone, including a spear, axe, and several implements, which would lead to the belief that the man to whom the bones belonged must have been, in some way or other, connected with the wood trade—that is to say, if carpenters, cabinetmakers, &c., flourished in his time. All the bones were in excellent preservation, one arm and hand being entirely without blemish. The skull bore evidence of its proprietor having, at some time or the other, received some hard knocks, probably in the battle-field while taking his part in some of those terrific en-

counters which are supposed to have taken place in ancient times. Unfortunately, before the man who was digging discovered the natural treasure, the implement he was using came in contact with the shell and broke a small piece out of the side of it; but the fragments have been carefully preserved, and might readily be fitted into the aperture. The egg itself is about 10 inches in length, and 7 inches in breadth, the shell being of a dirty brownish colour, and rather better than the thickness of a shilling coin. The inside is perfectly clear and free from all traces of decayed matter. From what Captain Davidson tells us, we should suppose that the ground where this relic was discovered must have been used as a cemetery at some distant period of the past, as Mr. Fyffe had previously found some interesting Maori emblems about the same place; but none of the natives about there—and some of them, we are informed, have arrived at very mature ages—have the slightest recollection of even having heard, as a matter of history, that any of their ancestors had found a final resting-place in that particular locality.”

Mr. Blyth exhibited some remarkably large horns of the Wapiti Deer (*Cervus canadensis*), and made some remarks on the different varieties of this Deer, two of which (*Cervus canadensis verus* and *C. canadensis occidentalis*) were represented by fine examples in the Society's Menagerie.

A paper was read by Mr. J. H. Gurney, F.Z.S., on a new and very singular Raptorial Bird, of general Buteonine aspect, but remarkable for its extremely wide gape, small bill destitute of a tooth, and the rudimentary pectination of the middle claw. For this curious form, a single specimen of which had been obtained by Mr. C. J. Andersson at Objimbinque, Damaraland, Mr. Gurney proposed the new generic and specific name *Stringonyx anderssoni*.

This paper will be published in the Society's 'Transactions.'

Mr. P. L. Sclater exhibited a collection of bird-skins formed by Mr. Henry Whitely in the vicinity of Hakodadi, Japan, during the winter of 1864-65. Mr. Sclater called particular attention to the following species, which were additional to those given in Captain Blakiston's papers on the birds of Hakodadi, published in the 'Ibis,' 1862-63:—

Caprimulgus jotaka.
Certhia, sp.
Troglodytes, sp.
Parus minor.
Anthus japonicus.
Turdus chrysolaus.
Fringilla montifringilla.
Montifringilla brunneinucha.
Emberiza variabilis.
 — *personata*.

Totanus glareola.
Gallinago, sp.
Podiceps, sp.
Spatula clypeata.
Fuligula clangula.
 — *histrionica*.
Harelda glacialis.
Phalacrocorax, sp.
Larus niveus, Pall.
Phaleris cristatella.

The following letter was read from Mr. E. L. Layard, Corr. Memb. :—

“ Cape Town, July 11, 1865.

“ *To the Secretary of the Zoological Society.*

“ SIR,—I perceive, by one of the printed notices, that on the 9th of May last a communication was read from Dr. G. Hartlaub, describing a new *Saxicola*, forwarded by me, and procured at Windvogelberg, in this Colony, by Capt. Bulger, of H.M. 10th Regiment, 2nd Battalion.

“ I have much pleasure in acquainting you that I can now supply a pretty full account of the habits, nest, and eggs of this species, through the kindness of my talented friend Mrs. Barber of Graham Town, an enthusiastic lover of natural history and botany.

“ My fair friend writes under date June 22nd, 1865—‘ These birds [*Saxicola spectabilis*, of which she sends specimens] are dwellers amongst the rocks, and frequent rocky mountains and hills, old stone kraals, &c., &c. They build their nests under shelving rocks, near or upon the ground, and sheltered by spreading ferns or long grass; and their eggs are usually three in number. The male is fond of placing himself on some high projecting rock, and of making himself conspicuous by chirping away in a cheerful voice, either to annoy a rival or amuse his mate; he is also fond of opening and shutting his wings, bowing and scraping, &c., and, I have no doubt, thinks a great deal of himself.

“ ‘The female is a very quiet retiring little body. The males possess the power of mocking other birds and animals. When we were living in the district of Graaf Reinet I had a beautiful spotted Mere Cat [*Suricata capensis*, Desm., the Meer Kat of the Dutch colonist, lit. Pismire Cat, or Ant Cat, from their feeding on ants.—E. L. L.], a tame one; it was very fond of me, and my companion in all my walks. These little animals have a peculiar bark, and produce a great variety of sounds with their pretty little voices; and these mocking-birds would imitate all the sounds that my pet made naturally. I have also heard them mocking our Robins (*Petrocincla superciliosa*, E. L. L.) and Sugar-birds (*Cinnyris*), but they seldom use this power. I send you a nest and eggs.’

“ The nest forwarded by Mrs. Barber is cup-shaped, 6" across and 3" deep, the cup $2\frac{1}{2}$ " across by $1\frac{1}{2}$ " deep, composed almost entirely of the fine roots of grasses (?), with here and there a strengthening twig; the lining is entirely of roots. Clinging round the outside, and worked into the structure so as not to be disturbed by the wind, are two fronds of the common fern (*Pteris aquilina*), effectually concealing the fabric from a casual observer. The eggs, three in number, are cream-coloured, with reddish blotches, more or less minute, thickly sprinkled throughout the surface, but coalescing into a ring at the obtuse end, on which some bluish tints may be observed. Each egg differs from the other in shape, the medium measurement is, axis 11''' , diam. $7\frac{1}{2}$ ''' .

"Capt. Bulger, in his letters and conversation with me, always called this bird 'the mocking-bird,' and corroborated Mrs. Barber's description of its vocal powers; in fact nothing was safe from its mimicking-powers. I have myself heard our common *Saxicola pileata* imitate the yelping of the farm-curs, the crowing and cackling of fowls, the calls of pheasants and partridges, the harsh notes of the fiscal (*Lanius collaris*), and the clear pipe of the robin.

"Trusting this little history of a new species may not prove uninteresting.

"I am, Sir,

"Yours very faithfully,

"EDGAR L. LAYARD, F.Z.S."

The following papers were read:—

I. ON A NEW PARROT OF THE GENUS NASITERNA.

BY P. L. SCLATER, M.A., PH.D., F.R.S.

(Plate XXXV.)

Our Corresponding Member, Mr. Gerard Krefft of Sydney, has lately sent me two specimens of a small Parrot in spirits, stated to be from the Salomon Islands, which turn out upon examination to belong to a new and very beautiful species of the genus *Nasiterna*. The little bird is of very great interest, as being a second known representative of this very peculiar genus of *Psittacidae*—hitherto supposed to be restricted to New Guinea and the Papuan Islands—and as affording an additional proof, if any such were needed, that the Salomon Islands belong strictly to the Austro-Malayan as distinguishable from the Pacific subdivision of the Australian Region.

I propose to call the new species

NASITERNA PUSIO. (Pl. XXXV.)

Supra viridis, pileo summo obscure cyaneo: fronte et capitis lateribus cum mento fulvis: subtus dilutior, medialiter flavicans: rectricibus duabus mediis cyaneis, macula ovali ad apicem nigra; ceteris nigris, pogonii interni parte apicali cum caudæ tectricibus inferioribus aureo-flavis: cauda rotundata, rectricum sex mediarum rachidibus protractis rigidis, acuminatis, ceterarum rigidiusculis.

Long. tota 3·3 poll. Angl., alæ 2·5, caudæ 1·1, tarsi 0·3.

Hab. Ins. Salomonenses.

Obs. Major quam *N. pygmæa*, et colore pilei et faciei, necnon forma et colore caudæ, facile distinguenda.

Of the two specimens received from Mr. Krefft, one which I now exhibit has been made into an excellent stuffed specimen by the artistic hands of Mr. Bartlett, and is the subject of the accompanying plate by Mr. Wolf. An examination of the second specimen left in spirits has enabled me to supply the following particulars concerning